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Typography by Seán Jennett

EDITORIAL

As I was walking towards the Charing Cross Road in a heavy shower of rain with two companions thinking about this editorial that I was unable to write, I reviewed in my mind the present state of poetry and the terrifying conditions in which most of the world lives. I had just seen a man from China who told me about the great need of the Chinese for English poetry. I had spent the night with a man who had recently flown back from India. My companions in this great storm of rain were two poets, one a refugee from the Europe which has been destroyed, perhaps its greatest voice, the other a Canadian who thinks only of Silone and Barea and the ghosts of the European figures of the past and the shadow of the liberty we have lost. I was wearing a hat one of them had lent me, and looking out from under its much too large brim falling on my nose at the mechanical desolation of traffic which pounded on and on with its appalling grind, rain or sunshine or autumn wind, jerking forward from amber to green, pulled up with a passionate whine by the red. And in the grey misery of the deluge I thought of the terrible desire for poetry of all the peoples of the world, like children asking for bread and life instead of death and cruelty. And I thought of the men gathered in Paris and New York sitting on different sizes of gilded chairs trying to decide whether Iceland or Albania should be allowed to join the club, or be excluded from it, while the unknown and unrepresented millions suffered without hope. And I was glad that I was walking in the mud with a couple of clowns who thought more of writing poetry than getting on in the world, and who could laugh and lend me a hat—yes, laugh, however bitterly—because they were true and just men, and their consciences were like the rain dropping from the dark heaven of injustice that covers us all.

DEREK STANFORD

Largesse

'*—loin des gens qui meurent sur les saisons.*'—RIMBAUD

Now autumn comes adventurers may take
to paths forbidden by the scorching sun;
follow far fuller landscapes of the future,
rich, hung with fruit and arabesques of gold.

Scenes and the seasons change. New lands, new lovers
await the step that wakes their innocence.
Now ends their drought. Their sultry dream is severed
with daylight's cockerel scissoring the dark.

Discoverers, and fools, and questioners,
shall we not take intoxication's track?
Ours is the easy luggage of pretension:
looking for ecstasy we travel light.

Mad hopes, hallucinations—these are precious;
these alone offer us goblets high with wine.
What, though no grape has ever stained our glasses . . .
this phantom bacchanale slakes our thirst.

Strange country-side perfumed with half-glimpsed flowers,
heaped up in yellow hay-ricks of delight;
lush, pagan-bodied berries, purple-tinted;
and faint bells ringing in the far away.

Fiddlers and vagrants, see, ripe inheritance calls you,
eager to pay back old debts in the silver of stars.
Let us burst open the sun-flower's hoarded exchequer.
Interest is doubled: to-day we are millionaires.

What moment now shall lead us to whisper Eureka?
Somewhere the pass-word impatiently struggles to birth;
somewhere Utopia beckons. . . . We pillage the hedge-rows,
plucking the berries that gleam like the far-away bells.

THOMAS GOOD

Via Crucis

Wisdom has turned my eyes to stone
Detained the whole property of a world
Perceived by the young, returning soldier
Abandoned, or the pitiless old.

Hustled chatter dooms the early streets,
Foolish words fingered in the wind,
O blind voices move across the city softly
Since your ancient grace has gone.

Or is it folly never to invoke
The arraigned pageantry of the eye,
That animation of perpetual spring
Our more certain fancies bring?

A child, too, could learn it,
Hatless and sniggering, if the sun
Were no more poisoned, here
In the ceremonial of light, by this rock,
Or silent by the hearth and husky clock.

Only the lamp breeds fear
Across the chasm's mouth, where
Another future is white heaven;
But Lucifer, proud as the night
Betrays the threshold, indicates the room,
Endorses secrets of a haunted womb.

Is this truly the way? The years'
Corrupt incision aligning
Never can singly stir
Sap that has sickened on the route
Of thorns, nor innocent joy recur
Opaque as windows in the bleak persuasive
Hush of penitential night.

Then was it merciful to breathe
Conventual silence, reluctant hours
When doctrine baffled, but the soul

Restrained the body, entertained
Perfection like a gardener,
Spectator of the miracle of flowers.

What burned then was wonder
Cruelty of coffins and duty of a shrine,
Our Lady's simple blue, where meek-eyed
The children muster, guests for the bread and the wine,
Awed by a taper.

As the picture to the image
As the mirror to the man
Veil appearance, the foils
Of ardent nature weave
Identical enigmas
Across the revolving span.

MAURICE CARPENTER

Eurydice's Lament

I

Cold in my room, my gold alone,
And all my blood a sleeping pond,
A dream rippled the withered bone,
My blood stood to a touched hand;
Came in pain, and could scarcely stand,
On my shocked shoulder cried for ease.
'I am lost and long in want,
Locked in my room love languishes.

II

I look for love of my bone brother,
I am his fullness and his wealth,
He goes his lonely way, does not bother
If I am sick, or in full health.
When I am clean he lies in filth,
When I am lustful he finds no ease
But scours the seas for what I could give;
Locked in her room love languishes.

III

I am his true love: I was never false;

I grew like a tree to fill his bowl,
Round me he danced before any walls
Covered or closed my final fall.
See I am tall and beautiful,
Could I not enrich the seas
He crosses? I his kind fulfil,
Locked in her room, love languishes.

IV

There in my cell, two walls away
Where I lay and languished in a long night,
The clouds came closer every day
Till I was shrouded from his delight.
Man wrecked himself, recked not my plight,
Nor saw the truth within my dish.
My wish was never to be his blight,
Locked in her room, love languishes.

V

I grew tall beneath the ragged veil,
I was the slave who made him rich,
My heart on his spear he would impale,
He left it there on the desolate beach.
Because I never would him impeach
Since I met him I have known no ease;
His anger was ever my white flesh;
Locked in her room love languishes.

VI

I sent my sap in the ebony
Totem that told him he should live,
I was the foliage of the green tree
Where he danced at night and defied the grave.
I was the gaping hole that forgave
And gave him back, again to come.
I was the soul he thought to save.
Love languishes in a locked room.

VII

The level ground had kissed his feet,
After the toes learned to uncurl,
I was the skill that got his meat,
I was the weapon he learned to hurl.

The Shaman danced; My tale he would tell;
The fire he worshipped was my bright bloom.
To me the lark and leopard fell;
Love languishes in a locked room.

VIII

The fire in the night burst like a spider,
The eyes in the fire that terrified,
Your eyes, man, were open wider
For I was walking by your side;
And yet you made me a mourning bride,
Shut me away in a hollow tomb,
Yet I would rise and be your pride;
Love languishes in a locked room.

IX

You locked me in a box with moths,
You locked me in a box with deeds,
The earth was parcelled in an office,
While I was lying in dire need.
I was ailing for your sweet aid,
You built a house with a hundred rooms,
But you kept me in a cold field,
Love languishes, locked in a tomb.

X

Now I will sit and sigh no more
If man will mend the wound he made,
I will come into the glittering tower
He has built on the green glade;
I am his mother and his mate
Burdened by his millenium,
With his love I have grown so great,
Love languishes in a locked room.'

XI

Lovely she looked and all my
Life grew green in the lonely bed.
Her tear was hidden in the eye
Of silence, touched by the gold bud.
She turned and looked at me with sudden
Smile, and drew me to her dream.
'Deny me never, I am human good.
Love languishes in a locked room.'

RUTHVEN TODD

This Lonely Month

This long and lonely month
With memory nagging like a broken gramophone,
Evenings devoted to darts and too much beer,
The early morning rising,
The battering awkwardly upon the typewriter
And the planting of strange seeds.
This long and lonely month.

This long and lonely month
With the emptiness full of fluff and feathers,
The silent house driving me out to walk
Alone along these Essex lanes,
Or to hoe the persistent weeds,
The nettles and the thistles that push up
Inevitably through the month.

O yes, the yellow rock-rose
Shews its wafer petals, and the scabious
Buttons the roadsides, and the strawberry
Ripens, and young apples fall.
Yes, the sad prisoners thin the beet
And the cuckoo presses on the ear,
This long and lonely month. . . .

This long and lonely month
Cannot efface my visual memories,
My last glance back before that corner
Cut like a razor blade.
Nor can I forget the small shadow
Sliding away along the western sky,
This long and lonely month.

This long and lonely month,
My love, has altered nothing in my heart;
In a far country you, too, are lonely,
And these lines I write you now
Send you my love and tell you that I myself
Have been lonely as a leper,
This long and lonely month.

SEAN JENNETT

Sonnet

When summer is gorged with light
and the large leaves drowsily hang
on the bent branch; when the cuckoo calls
and the thrush sings early and late:
then pale boy and painted girl
forsake the streets to wander by the river
or lie together in the meadow grasses
while the tall stalks bend and furl
over them, a valley of green shadows
capped by cotton clouds in a blue sky:
O now in love they think themselves in bliss
high as the hawk that hangs above the meadows.
in marchpane sweetness invincibly secure
as vole or mouse among the roots of grass.

KATHLEEN NOTT

Autobiography

What is my name?—I love.
A mad cold sky-light
blanches me old, who trembling-weak and young,
trapped between walls of dark and dark, have only
room to stand beneath this weight of heaven,
which was the headpiece of my cot;
which will be yet the lintel of my tomb:
whose whiteness, while it masks and blinds me, singles me
strange and untouchable, the smitten
outcast, or the half-deciphered and memorial
wonder of other worlds and lives, catching
the breath that might destroy it, and still dying
from subtle long profound erosion by the darkness. Dark
and dark, each side of me, stand like the cloaked
and faceless messengers of past and future,
hiding the whiteness of their message.
Never shall I,
the pitied focus of their palpable breath and sight,

of them, inscrutable, unseen, be told
my name and lineage nor my heirs.
Never I was,
before the subject of my being—I Love.
And that was always—this is the top,
where the light strikes, the cavern-mouth of endless time:
we have not yet made the future—with thought or fear
hold off the curtain and zero-dark of death,
we Two (there is always an echo and always a mirror).

Thus am I dowered with space of antique night,
where stones and trees bore sudden fruit
of lives and gods, where eyes and hair and hands
started from the monolith, and the blind Things
wove power and distance and had wings imprisoned,
and voices, and there grew, beyond a doubt,
a pulse-beat back from difficult forms in forest twilight.

We have flung the stars in our well, we mingle, we two,
with shining and dark and air, while shapes and beings
state us their inventory in polish of silence.
Stillness and power are the infinite twin dimensions of our loving,
its void the eternal occupation of time,
whose slow accompaniment of Indian dark
gives white-faced glimpses, where a century weakens,
threadbare to turning light or the big pulse
of lives that sob to waking.
Faces or waving gulls, or sails?
Always the one face, haunted, pursued, pursuing,
always the imprisoned and distorted whisper—
and I can only read your mirror life,
and our enchantment weaves its power and distance,
and yet such perfect vigilants we love as,
never through all time's night we claimed relief from loving.

Still then may long and brooding Indian darkness
breed single fruit of trial and patience. Ah, my love,
wax then to recognition and salute
and brief abeyance of this closing death,
while narrow blackness strikes its roots and branches. Do I
carry a torch to light our haggard whiteness?

JAMES LAUGHLIN

When Does the Play Begin

(A Political Poem)

Mother when does the
show begin when does

something happen hush
dear be quiet in just a

minute now but you
said that a long time

ago I want the curtain
to go up hush dear be

quiet it's never good
manners to talk when

the music is playing
but mother I'm tired

of the music and they
keep playing the same

piece hush darling in
just a minute now here

eat a piece of candy
no I don't want any

more candy mother I
want them to begin the

play I want to see the
lights go on and have

the people walk around
and talk and laugh and sing.

(From 'Some Natural Things',
New Directions 1945)

J. H. SINGER

Cain

As dear and deaf to shiverings of mercy
As the cold club to Abel's wound, you freeze
To heaven while I drift to days and fearless
Ways.

You muxt explore the tomb, its limits, silence,
Sound; and sit in villages where no sun sets,
And no sun rises. I must live by violence.
Cats

Will wake in winter. Through my wealth of alleys
Lions and rats will swarm. And I more old
At moonrise than sunrise wane by the hilly
Shore.

But never forget the price that you paid for silence,
The hot moment or the cold hereafter. See,
There are laurel wrinkles on my brow, nor does the sly dance
Die
WITH ME.

J. B. PICK

Lament

Now death, the truthful scientist,
Leads us in the deserts of analysis,
The old world dissipates towards infinity—
O false love lost was better than the State's oasis!
Now poets are the dead wood, none will require the sticks,
Heat is a dry deception on the watered blood—
Sigh, sigh lost martyrs of the mind and heart,—
Responsibility and faith and freedom are among the dead.

IAIN FLETCHER

Sonnet

The unexpected Good will ransom him at last
And, the long beast relinquished, he will grow
Purposelessly bright, and like a past
Whose body flows away from now;

When something quite remarkable and lonely
Moves in his eye, illuminates the frown
And apprehensions of the Only;
And he will wear it gently like a crown.

Having put on this strangeness, it will be
Nothing to taste like music or a face,
But shine apart, without finality,

Until his world is still; lifted up
He waits without distress, and like a cup
Unfilled; and he is light and being and a space.

Visitation

If they were still there when you came back:
The books and the cold pencil, when quite alone
You were willing to accept; if the green water
Possessed you like gentle hands, then,
You had enjoyed the almost-being falsely!

If you never turned
To appear like nothing in the moment,
To leave them still and gloomy under
Boughs of space and memory, they were never distant;
The garden-seat resumed its apparitions;
The reeds supposed their supple visitations.
But you were lost. O they would never love
You by that never-watered, unconsolable pool!

ERIC NIXON

Rockclimbers' Grave, Wastdale

Quiet in this churchyard they rest
whose end was falling under skies of stone
far from the bewilderment of cities
or the pain of women.
They climbed like hawks into the crystalline clouds
under the enfolding arms of snow
knowing theirs was a love
no lips could cure or woman tend.
Now where the yew tree grows
they sleep with
the comforting fingers of the roots.

Druids Circle, Keswick

The gaunt fells drape vast shrouds
emerald clean under the skies of stone
watching the year turn the dead over
watching claw and skull sink in the earth
buried under the obdurate screes.

Once the druids here grew
their fingers sunless as roots
weaving this symbol of the full moon
pitched for sightless years under the fells.

The sentinel cairn mantled by the wind
listens to the whistling gap,
the curlews screaming of blood
harvest the mist with their hysterical sickles
wheeling over the rain-washed temple

but the stupid sheep
rub themselves on the stubborn stones
trindling on the sacred circle
and sneer at the petrified druids.

ROY McFADDEN

Ballyorney

May the blue hill that masks your windowpanes
Colour the minds of all within your house
And cast a gentle shade of innocence
Where thought transcends all violence and ploughs
An intimate acre with wise indolence,
Stranger to plunging horse and lashing reins.

Now read a lesson from indifferent stone:
Aloofness fosters comprehension,
And from a hill one views a whole townland.
He who becomes a hill's companion
Stiffens to stone the heart's loose shifting sand
And turns the wail of flesh to calm of bone.

I recollect Glencree, that voiceless place
Where nothing moves but the slow tide of air
Swinging a noiseless curtain against time.
Nothing it seems could alter or impair
That quietness—not even the clock's chime
At the hand's fatal move on the blind face.

But one implacable memory plucks at thought,
Bringing the challenge of that honest mind,
Of one who took a sick world for a cross,
Forsaking all that's intimate and kind,
And died, in the conviction that the loss
Was small beside the chaos that she fought.

I move between two worlds: between Glencree
And the self's courted murderous Kinsale
Coiled in the burning centre of the ring,
The ultimate betrayal of the Gael
To the fierce fires of Europe, whose flames fling
Fingers that scorn the crust's identity.

So I can write a blessing for that place—
Smooth apple of silence, ignorant of the worm,
The coil of fire that sears the passionate heart—:

Weather means calm as well as violent storm.
I move between two worlds; for now all's part
Of the white death on that remembered face.

JOHN TRENCH

Germany

Dark in the heart of flesh, close to the bone
Pain dwells, smooth leopard sliding up for a caress
Secret and intimate; his soft paw falls;
Disaster is the pattern of his coat.
The wild thing knows, the hunted, the small terrified
Hiding, how black alone, how no help near,
Fear comes, worlds fall,
Secret and intimate as a caress,
As rain unseen raises a dark stain
On marble, mandrake foliage, the grave's harvest.
(The wounded lark in the belly of the stone
Beating its wings; blind limbs of an old dancer.)

Knowing the sodden graveyard and the marble,
Knowing to do but not the will to do,
Knowing the time but unaware of Time,
A peasant woman between shiny crosses
Drives her patient spade in weeds and grasses
Folded in silent weeping
Tied in Time and groping
Eyeless for abolished towers.

O focus of a world in dissolution,
Scooping a manshaped hole in the rind of the world
It is not foretold you should find a gap in Time,
You are held and the stream will scrape you,
Strip you and skin you against calamity,
The seamless walls of the tomb.

Nor in sleep forgetting
The fields and the corn rotting.

ELIZABETH BERRIDGE

Poem for a Drowned Romany

(To PATRICK MCEVOY)

'*How far are you below—*
How deep in solid quietnesses of green
Does your tattered body flow?
Slow, or swift?
Fish spin or dream drift,
How do you go?

Are you two miles under—
Who loved the windy green miles of the downs,
Hill-rumbling thunder?
Sundered in sea-wrack
Dangle-legs, broken back
Where is your wonder?'

'*How do I go?*
Two horizontal miles is nothing, friend.
Soon walked, soon done with.
But how far down, far-finished, final
For me; what weight of waters make
The sea-vertical!

The sea-lanes hold me now.
A wealth of strange, translucent
Hedges.
Trees anchored on shells.
Octopi breathing thick as my camp-fire.
I turn my gaze on a handful of fish
thrown over my head
Like birds from the palm of the wind,
Pitch my tent on coral . . .'

'*What?*
Something was said
From tongueless mouth and opaline eyes
Or were there bubbles in my head?
O dead! And I above
Send token of our love
To your lonely sea-bed.'

OS MARRON

Casals at the 'Cello

His deep sword touches universal wounds
and weeps over continents where sounds
are the graves of gods and the grief of men
when hero and loser lie in the same pain
under the thunder as the sky unrolls

as a parchment of precise fine scrolls
everyone knows but none understands
for these signs never came from hands
and sounds not from mouth or mind
cast shadows unremoved by any wind;

he will close eyes, ease pain, be comforted,
Colossus-in-ordinary, unaccompanied.

The Tears

I think now and again of the nobody,
the stooping boy shouldered out of play,
a pebble high and dry of the pool.

I think now and again of the unhappy,
a frustrated daughter in an artificial tower,
standing milk turned sour.

I think now and again of the lonely
twisted like cactus in the desert of the city,
a dry pea in a bag of peas.

I think now and again of the unfulfilled,
the orchards of half-grown fruit,
standing trees beset with inward rot.

Now and again I have seen their tears
roll down the deadly daily mask of patience,
cold rain trickling the slab of marble years.

LAWRIE SCARLETT

The Islander

My eyes are marble
my veins are wire

It is the end of the season of growth
the olives are withered
you cannot eat the stones

The boat in the secret cove
cannot save me now
the sails untended are rags
the planks unoiled are warped

Here I stay
as the orchards rot
the branches snap under the weight of nests
there are stone eggs in the nests

there is nobody to bury me
the wind and the returning birds
will not mourn me

DAVID WRIGHT

The Glimmering Country

Pete Rousecastle the sailor's son
From the Isle of Anglesey
Facing to the West
Tired of the concave undercoloured sky

And of the landscapes heights afford,
Deep vales, land-swelling plains;
And to be free of all
Familiar natural aspects, mountain-chains

River-abysms, waterfalls,
And archipelagoes,
Looked on the sea
Folding its waves like an unfolding rose.

Pete Rousecastle the sailor's son
Heard from no siren throat
The baffled, low,
Endearing, murmurous, and glutted note

Thrown by the sea to all her own.
Indeed Rousecastle saw
Alone the flat
Discontinuation of the local shore;

And he walked down to the mud beach,
His heart was light with an idea,
And on the horizon
Which hid beneath its straight line Africa,

The sea's familiar seaports, and
Landfalls, fixed staring eyes,
Continued on
His chosen path.
The waters round him rise;

The small waves buffet him, and cling
His blue jeans jacket to his breast;
Still he walks down
The bed of ocean until the topmost

Hair of his head is under sea.
Rousecastle, sailor's son,
Now down, deep down,
The hungry sea that made his father drown,

Visits the plains of the ocean
The glimmering country
Darker than tombs
And unfamiliar angles of the under sea.

MODERN POETRY AND THE ORDINARY MAN

BY SEÁN JENNETT

from a lecture delivered to the Oxford University English Club

I suppose that in other periods than this there have been people who found the poetry of their own day difficult to understand. To-day there are many such people, and many of them not of feeble mind, but undoubtedly clever and intelligent. Quite a number of them are critics. And there is also the vast mass of people who are neither unusually clever nor unusually intelligent, but just ordinary common people, reluctantly earning their living, and wearing out their lives ignorant of the depths and richness of experience to be found in poetry.

I will not declare that poetry is for every man. It is, rather, like a tree, independent of man's opinion, holding its existence within itself. And as any man who has in him the capacity for wonder may admire the tree, so may he admire poetry. Poetry demands from him what the miracle of the tree demands, entry into his soul. It asks right of way into the fortress that he builds about himself, and that, having entered, it shall be taken for what it is and not for what was looked for. Those who enjoy poetry most and who receive most from it are those who come to it without prejudices or preconceptions concerning its function and form.

Among our earliest delights as children are nursery rhymes, many of which are no mere verse. In school we learned simple little poems, and some not so simple. But school is probably where the failure begins. You cannot teach poetry or put it into a curriculum. Poetry is the creation of a mind in tension and it can only be understood by a mind attuned to receive it. The only way to develop an appreciation of poetry in someone is to encourage him to adventure for himself. Never, never, should he be told that here is a great poem and be commanded to study it and to like it. But that is what was done, and what still is done. And the result is that for a great many people their interest in poetry has been effectively restricted and hamstrung before they have understood enough to see beyond the jingle of rhyme and alliteration and the pleasant lilt of simple metrical schemes. They cannot read modern poetry, and short of a cataclysm to wash away their prejudices will continue to remain ignorant of it. Their interest may survive, but with the crippling conviction that poets ceased to be born after the end of the nineteenth century. They believe that modern poetry is not poetry at all, but a degenerate sham. They come to modern poetry with precon-

ceptions and prejudices concerning what poetry should be, and they find that they cannot square them with the new things that go under the same name as the old ones they think they understand.

That there is a difference between modern poetry and the sort that immediately preceded it is undoubted, and sometimes the difference seems acute. The words 'modern poetry' have come to mean not merely poetry written to-day, but poetry of a distinctive kind. Modern poetry is different because we are different from the people who have lived before us, because our world is a very different world from that of our ancestors. So very different that inevitably our words and ways of thought are different too. But modern poetry is not something completely new, as though it were a child without parents, a miraculous creation. A glance through an anthology will show that poetry has not always been the same. Indeed it has hardly been the same two moments running. From Chaucer to Swinburne it has changed constantly. But poetry is not a series of unrelated periods. It is an organic growth, in which there have been phases of stagnation and phases of efflorescence. Our phase must be placed in the latter class, for whatever may be one's opinion of modern poetry, it certainly cannot be said to be stagnant—though some critics aver nevertheless that it stinks. But in spite of difference modern poetry visibly springs from what has gone before, and in an anthology that includes the modern poets the relation and the difference are apparent. It is clear that in each period a different kind of poetry has appeared, and what all the fuss is about to-day is that we are finding the expression most suited to our own minds and circumstances.

Our common man who attempts modern poetry finds even the attempt difficult and discouraging because he is still overshadowed by the technique of the eighteenth century and the sentiment of the nineteenth. He appears to labour under the peculiar belief that poetry from Shakespeare to Swinburne is all of a piece, apart from one or two oddities like Blake and Browning, who of course are the exceptions that prove the rule. For him poetry that does not scan according to his lights is not poetry. Poetry that does not confine itself to a special fine language and a special series of fit subjects is not poetry.

The argument about scansion proceeds from the commonly accepted notion that each line of a poem should conform to a predetermined arrangement of metrical feet. That the metrical system, with its iambs, trochees, dactyls, and the rest, is an inapplicable theory, in English at least, any honest investigation should

have shown. It takes account only of the tonic accent of words, and ignores entirely the weight and duration and emotional stress of the accented syllable. It ignores silences, the deliberate pauses or rests recognized in music and equally part of language.

It needs little research to discover that the highest flights of poetry in any period are not written in conformity with the foot metric. The poet writes by ear, and his ear has led him to offend against the law. Wherever there is stress of emotion, wherever there is noble language and noble thought, the foot metric falls away and we must look for something else if we are to find the true basis of the music.

The first attempt at a new interpretation of the principles of prosody seems to have been made by an Irishman called Joshua Steele in 1775. He was premature and his ideas were promptly forgotten. Browning in his practice seems to have been aware of the insufficiency of the foot metric, and Hopkins suggested a new means of measurement, but was led astray by the overpowering influence of tradition. It was left for Patmore to resurrect the ideas of Joshua Steele, to investigate them, and to publish them anew.

It is necessary to put out of mind altogether the regular alternation of loops and dashes typical of the notation of the foot metric. Words are sounds and in as much as they are built of sounds poems are compositions in music. Therefore we must go to music for our analysis of prosody. The divisions of metre are not feet, but bars, as in music, and these bars may contain unequal numbers of notes. I am not going to pretend that you can calibrate syllables by accent or stress in terms of breves, semi-breves, crotchets, and minims, and the rest. That is to take the argument too far. But you can say that a stressed syllable is equal to two with less stress, you can argue that a bar of two syllables emotionally stressed is the equivalent of another with four or five syllables in which there is only one stress, and that a light one. Words, even words of equal stress, do differ in their metrical value, for some vowels are longer than others, some consonants or groups of consonants require greater effort of the vocal apparatus. And then in speech there are certain pauses, the small pauses that occur when the tongue and teeth are changing position to recover from the last syllable and to frame the next; pauses inserted deliberately for effect; and of course the caesura. These are fine distinctions, but they must be recognized. They are not recognized by the foot metric, but they can be and are allowed for in the bar metric. It follows that a line of five bars may have a different number of syllables in each bar, but each bar will begin, as in music, with an accented syllable.

I will not assert that the poets of to-day are all aware of this theory of prosody. I feel sure that most of them are not. But I do assert that modern poets show a strong tendency to trust to ear rather than to the foot metric. The musical quality of verse depends finally on the poet's ear, and no rule or system can overcome a deficiency there.

Among other things that distinguish modern poetry is an inclination to take rhyme less seriously than was once the custom. Rhyme has always been a charming, not to say a lovely, element in English verse, but from the first there has been a noticeable tendency to abandon it in the highest poetry, or else so to interspace it that the chiming is rendered less obvious by being less expectantly awaited. For in less competent hands than the most adept rhyme has serious drawbacks. It may so easily import a sense of insincerity and artificiality, and it may so easily degenerate into a recurring jingle. Even at best, it has a tendency to end-stop the lines, whether enjambment is practised or not, to compel a pause to recognize the relation of sound at the expense of continuity of sense.

Our contemporaries, while not necessarily recognizing themselves as incapable of the proper use of rhyme, have sought to avoid the dangers while still retaining something of the charm. They have done this by abandoning or modifying rhyme. Rhyme is not an element in all verse, and some languages, among them Gaelic, rarely use it. Instead of rhyme Gaelic resorts to assonance, and the effect is broadly that of rhyme that is there and that yet is hidden and unassertive. It is realized perhaps subconsciously, and the relation of sound is not strong enough to mark the end of the line with the brake of rhyme. Assonance has been repeatedly tried in English, but it does not appear to have been altogether successful. English ears, not being used to it, do not seem to catch it, and perhaps a prior sensitiveness, a prior expectation of it proceeding from tradition, is necessary.

A different means of achieving the same result appeared for the first time, as far as I am aware, in the poems of Wilfred Owen. It has come to be called, rather inaccurately, half-rhyme, and for want of a better name we must continue to call it so. True rhyme, as you know, demands identity not only of vowel sound, but also of any consonants following the vowel. Assonance requires only identity of vowel sound. Owen's half-rhyme abandons identity of vowels and depends on identity of consonants, as for example in 'road' and 'reed', 'queer' and 'choir'. It is consonantal rhyme, an extension of the principle of alliteration, enforced by the contrasting vowel. In

this form the consonants match both before and after the vowel. Later, further to conceal the rhyme, a variety appeared in which only the final consonant is identical, for example, 'gate' and 'boat', 'sand' and 'wound'.

There are other things that distinguish some modern poetry, and among them are cheapjack attempts to achieve something new at all costs. These are true signs of paucity of spirit, of dearth of inspiration and ability. There is nothing worth while in novelty for its own sake. At the bottom of the scale is the practice of novelty or oddity in typography. Yet out of typographical oddity has come something valuable in a minor way. It is the abandonment of the capital letter at the beginning of each line, a matter about which some diehards and last-ditchers have been remarkably bitter. I am aware of the objections I raise when I describe these capitals as meaningless. If I may make a guess, I would say that they have been imposed on us by the calligraphers of the scriptorium, who seized on the excuse for a flourish. Their flourishes are now museum exhibits, and we live under the supremacy of the printing machine. In my opinion, and it is the opinion of a typographer, printed capitals are unpleasant in quantity and are better avoided. Further, the abandonment of these capitals, and the use of capitals in poetry exactly as in prose, helps to elucidate the poem, and is valuable on that account alone.

There is a difference in subject matter between modern poetry and that of, let us say, the later part of the nineteenth century. It has been asserted that poetry should be the medium for the expression of the beautiful, that it should consist of beautiful thoughts and no others, and that these thoughts should be expressed solely in beautiful words. Here is the notorious poetic diction, which returns again and again. It is a vulgar notion, and there are many things wrong with it. What is a beautiful word? Is there such a thing? And can a thought be beautiful in itself? The poet may seek beauty, but what he understands by the word may be very different from what is understood by those who decry him. He may seek it in places and under circumstances that seem to them very unlikely and even ridiculous. I recognize no bounds to poetry, no walled garden of Eden. The subject of poetry, the immediate subject, is anything and everything. There is nothing that cannot inspire some man to that way of looking at the world that strikes sparks from the heart and sets afire the dust of the road. A poem is an urgent message, a burning light, not an entertainment to drive off the monotony of a journey or a bauble to amuse an empty mind. The poet has no time and no desire to pander. What are his emotions?

Pity, anger, love, terror, exultation, adoration—and many more. And what is his purpose? Who can tell? For he himself may know no more than that he must express the turbulent spirit within him. Yet he does wish to inquire into things, to discover the eternal basis of man's relation to the world about him and to the supernatural that at all times and in all countries men have conceived to be above the world. The universe is the poet's field.

He cannot be bound by restricted verbal forms. The fruit of his inquiry he may express in any words that seem to him to capture the image he seeks to grasp. The reader must follow, and not lag behind complaining. But in the end it is not the words that matter, nor the rhythm, nor the form. These alone do not make poetry. The essence and the animation of poetry lie in the truth of the poet's vision, in the spoil of his adventure in the eternal humanity of man.

Poetry is fundamentally a speech form, and from the realization of this there has arisen the idea that ordinary speech may be, or should be, used in poetry. This Wordsworthian notion has at times been pushed very far in our day, and when the traditionalists, forgetting Wordsworth, object, they are for once right. There are, and there always have been, two kinds of language in any country that has developed an aesthetic use of words. One is the language of common speech, and the other is the language of literature. These two languages differ because one is a mere medium of communication and little else, used carelessly and without art, while the other is the restrained and purposeful use of words to an end greater than and including communication.

The difference must never be allowed to become too wide. Common speech shifts and changes, and literary language also changes. The two must change in parallel lines if they are not to become mutually incomprehensible and repugnant. Common speech is the living form of the language, and on it must be based the language of literature, from it literature draws its life. It is not as uncomplicated as this, of course, for literature also affects common speech. What is true is that literature cannot be based on literature alone. As speech changes the language of literature must also change, though it will remain always more restrained, more aloof from the daily soilure and misuse, more careful, more direct, and more ambitious.

An analogous contention is that poetry should be written in such wise that it shall be comprehensible to the common man. Because modern poetry does not baulk at difficulty and obscurity, it is therefore alleged to be bad poetry. It is inferred that the critic understands all poetry written before the moderns came on the

scene. He understands a great deal more than I do, a great deal more than some of the greatest minds have understood. For if poetry has a message for all men, all of its message is for no man. The peculiarity of poetry is that it allies itself with the individual experience of the reader, that it is different for every man.

Poetry that is easily understandable by the ordinary man is not necessarily bad poetry, though some would have it that it is; and neither is it necessarily good poetry. While it is certainly true that much of it is bad, much of it is of the very highest quality. The slushy sentiment of the female paragraph poets is not the logical or the only end of poetry for the people. The only qualification of the people's poet is that his work shall arise out of his own nature and not be the result of anyone's idea of what the people want. This is the condition of all poetry. In other words, popularity must be an accident. The writing of poetry is not a democratic function and the people have no franchise.

What the poet does is not done in the service of the public, and though he may feel that he works in service it is unlikely that he understands what service it is. This raises a question. Any art, and poetry most patently, is a kind of communication, but communication with whom? The poet may neither know nor care. The creative act entails a search for form, and though he may be physically reluctant to write, and often is, the poet experiences a mental compulsion that is difficult to ignore, and that drives him towards form. In some men it has been so strong that it is questionable whether they have been monomaniacs from the beginning or have been driven to madness by it. The poet writes because it is his nature to write, and the fact that what he writes proves obscure to some and meaningless to others may cause him some concern for the survival of his work, and even for his own survival if he depends on his work for his bread, but it is of no other importance.

Nevertheless it is important for the reader to remember that poetry is a kind of communication. The poet is trying to say something. If the poem is obscure the obscurity must proceed either from his struggle with the material or from the nature of the thing he wants to say.

Words are part of his material, he must use words to express himself. Words are a medium of exchange, coin of the realm. They are mere noises if they do not convey meaning, however absurd that meaning may be. Words used solely for their sound do not make a poem, they make music. In poetry meaning must lie within sound. Words may be said to be coins or counters of speech, but they are not, like coins or counters, sharply defined, ponderable,

and capable of being seized and held. Words have no specific gravity. They have no definite boundaries or shape, but are kaleidoscopic and protean. Each is surrounded by an aura, a penumbra, of extra-conscious or sub-conscious meaning, fading imperceptibly into the unknown and the incomprehensible. And the centre is itself no fixed point, but a shifting, imperfect focus. Even to speak of a centre is misleading, for a word may have several foci of meaning, subtly different, each one of which may predominate according to the circumstances in which the word is used, or even according to the reader's experience or physical surroundings. You cannot take a word and say that here is something whole and complete. A word is only a convenient division of language, and is nothing until it is used, when it is affected sensibly by the company into which it is thrust, by the subject and by the style.

It is the peculiar characteristic of the poet that he makes use of the shifting quality of words, that out of what may be thought to be an imperfection of language he strives to fashion the perfect vehicle of his vision. In his line the word may have much more than the common shade of meaning; it may, as it were, have ring on ring of meaning, like ripples spreading from a stone flung into water, all moving and existing coevally, or ring on ring of fugitive colour, like a patch of oil on the street, changing as you move about it. This does not make for clearness and ease of reading, and it does make for obscurity. It causes confusion and resentment among the sort of people who want things clear cut and simple, who want to be able to grasp a poem as simply as they grasp a chocolate éclair.

Because of their lack of sharp focus, and especially by reason of their sound, words are instruments of suggestion. This quality is of the greatest importance in poetry. A whole poem may be built on it, almost to the exclusion of direct meaning. Such a poem would undoubtedly be obscure to many. But it is only if we apply the limited definition of a poem as an instrument of communication that we can criticize it for its lack of direct meaning.

The imprecision of words makes it difficult for the man who desires to write precisely and exactly. There are such people, and only one example is the scientist. The invention of new words or resort to those of long dead languages is in vain. A new word must be comprehensible to others than the writer if it is to have any use, and immediately it enters into exchange it begins to alter, to become diffused. The corners are rubbed off and it gathers moss. It may for some time retain its core, but about that core will grow the shadows and twilights of connotation. This growth never ceases, even for old words. Perhaps it is this knowledge that lies behind the struggle

of some poets with words, that of T. S. Eliot, for example, in the *Four Quartets*, in which he complains of the imprecision of language as though to use words at all were to confuse the issue, while at the same time he exploits connotation with the hand of a master.

What then is the obscurity that is objectionable in some modern poetry? It is that which is the result of paucity of imagination, of the lack of something to say, or lack of adequate equipment with which to say it; or of deliberate mystification used as a cloak for poverty and meanness. It is the obscurity of twisted syntax and personal grammar; of peculiarity of punctuation or absence of it; of symbolism too private ever to be understood by anybody; and worst of all of typographic idiosyncrasy.

It appears then that while poetry of value and even great poetry may be written, and has undoubtedly been written, of such a kind that it is easily understanded of the people, and further may be accepted by them, poetry in general must suffer stultification if it is to be subjected to their standards, or lack of standards. Restriction of the poet to the lowest common denominator of his audience can only result in the restriction and the desiccation and the death of poetry. The poet writes for himself, and if his work demands such knowledge and experience of the reader that it is not easy to understand, then the reader who would understand must acquire that knowledge and experience.

If the problem is to be tackled it can only be tackled from the other direction, by the way I suggested at the beginning of this lecture. The poet cannot be reduced to the level of the people, and therefore the people must be raised nearer the level of the poet. They cannot be taught what good poetry is, but the technical tricks may be demonstrated to them, and they can be persuaded to adventure for themselves among the works of the dead and the living, and encouraged to form out of their experience of poetry a reasonable standard of appreciation. I do not mean to imply that education is all that is required for the appreciation of poetry, for that is obviously untrue. But I do feel that there are many people who do not read poetry who would do so had their minds not been adversely affected by incompetent teaching, by false ideas of the place of art, or by an inferiority complex arising out of defeat and expressed in contempt of the cause. There are many people, and they are ordinary people, who need poetry, and could make use of it, if they were not afraid of it. They spend their lives in ignorance of the passion and the terror and the wonder of poetry, and do not know that they have lost so much that makes life worth living.

JAMES KIRKUP

The Sleeper in the Earth

PROLOGUE

I wish that I could tell you all,
and how it came to be
that I, a wanderer on hidden roads
was roused from the mephitic spell of clay
in which my weightless hair had seemed to drag my
loaded head away.

How I, a chained creature, whose elastic shadow
chafed at the freedom of the public parks,
was suddenly constrained to make my best departure,
summoned by an urgent bell, that stopped
my heart with silence at a shut gate's iron No.

And I became the veiled figure of the evening, hurrying
along deserted pathways, sinister, alone, and always late . . .
I wish that I could tell you all that followed,
how with half-averted face
I stumbled round the darkened room of death.

But it is difficult for you to know
that I can not announce myself
conventionally, with a formulated greeting:
no, I must take you unawares, insidious as fear, or slow
poison, suddenly as spring, or night in the tropics.

Only believe. All I can say is
look, here is the bud that bursts
soundlessly, or with an almost
soundless interjection bursts among us all
with the remotest music we shall ever know.

O take me while you still have breath
to feed a human insufficiency, and be the harbour
of my love's mysterious lucidity.

Only believe. We are no more
than leaves falling in the falling snow,

driven in confusion endlessly together
in the world's endless weather.

Part I: THE DESCENT

I

There is a time, and it is neither late nor soon,
when darkness follows darkness, as it did the day.
By star and moon the light of morning is consumed,
the rainbows and horizons fade, no dawn is red.

There is a darkness and a darkness which no sun
can separate, no moon illumine, and no star
revivify; a darkness which no inner dream
compresses magically in a moment's eye.

There is that night that no insomnias disturb,
when cries and broken words and laughter never come
to echo in the cages of the silent house,
when no satanic nightmare knocks the brain awake.

The body there awaits no shattering sheer fall
from perpendicular into the hidden heart's
one fathomless awakening abyss of fright,
and down the wall's dry well the tongue's dead leaf is blown . . .

If some night-wanderer throws off his leaden sheets
to walk the corridors of clay, the wells of earth,
or beat at half-forgotten windows filled with stones
his frail, star-shaped hands that weep in cold clouds of hair,

who will believe the testimony of his soul?
Or greet his vast, hallucinated silence with
one word of welcome, the redeeming smile of love?
For there no prayers are heard, no visionary book

resolves the blackness, no consoling taper throws
life's shadow on the dark impenetrable door
ajar on rock-face, and whose apparent threshold
in inexorable distance, negotiated somehow . . .

II

Down a dark hill
the body rolls, without hope
without fear, down the slope
so inaccessibly profound
that in the martyred will
the soul perishes without a sound.

In the shut telescope
of death, laid out in long
robes no moth devours, but champing
worm and wild snail pierce
quietly, without the reckonings of hope
or fear, without the subterfuges of remorse . . .

the sleeper founders,
sinking with all
hands, with more
than dream-precision
to the place prepared
for him alone, the bed
curtained in earth
canopied in stone
from which he may not climb
until the time is come,
until the moment's
necessary pain
contracts its bitter star,

until the given sign

III

The face is forgotten, eyes are no longer blue,
fingers clutch the air's
crumbled statue, and the voice repeats no more
the worried prayer, the treasured name.
In the hollow skull

the rain pelts as in a wild bird's
abandoned nest, the wind's open mouth
fills to the teeth with snow,
the spread shadow and the soiled clump of hair
fastened to earth with frost's lucent strings.

But the sleepwalker dreams he goes
unhindered, without hope,
carrying a shrivelled cape
of skin and hair,
a withered-joke, without fear.

IV

Deep, deep in earth,
not as diamonds or trees, though these
may be flowers, bearded gems, or leaves
that move at times around me.
No inward water-ravening root

seeks deeper down than I
who am the earth's red seed
and centre, and whose blood
is broken on the uncovered stars
that base their innocence upon the sun's black integer.

I, a walking dream, stand at the centre of the earth,
and my many hands of stone
touch everywhere its surface,
and my fingers reaching all ways
wear the tropics like a ring.

I am the crater and the cone
of snow, the brilliant
equator dividing heat and cold.
There is no east or west, no north
or south in which I do not rest.

I am the earth's black crescent
shadow on the white wall of the moon.
I can be simple or profound
like mountains or indolence,
unapproachable as silence, and good as love.

I love the shape of man, I am the warm
current in his grey rock of grief.
My skin is white or dark, my clothing fur
or silk or grasses: still my curious human form
remains unchanged, my blood is warm with love.

You, clouds, that go
before me if I am the wind,
and die for me if I am rain or snow,
and are made whole again, somewhere,
somehow, by a secret all shall know.

You, volcanoes, whose black
hearts bleed in pits of ice,
and you, the jellied sea-cave, re-echoing
a harp-shaped ocean, like a delicate shell
embedded in the forehead of the listening cliff.

Darkness, you, too,
with your mysterious offerings
of sleeplessness and sleep,
and sometimes the moon's half-smile
immobilizing action in a dream of flight.

And memory, that comes and goes
without a sound, and at a word
revives and flourishes like toy
flowers in the remembering brain's
dark pool of lost colours.

Illness, that breaks the hand's subtle lines
and numbs the cherished face with pain, or fright . . .
(O pain, destiny and death, O how
shall we destroy you, glittering
underground, inexhaustibly mineral?)

All these I find again
as I dream I move within
my chrysalis of wood and earth.
Wait for my hollow eyes to be re-opened
and my limbs to be renewed in Time's

curious rebirth.
I walk now
through the earth gathering flowers.

Part II: THE RESURRECTION

I

I walk through the earth,
I arise and walk through
the earth gathering flowers.
First the wreaths that withered at my side,
the wired crown now fallen from my brow, the melted
roses black as coals around my feet,
the child's fantastic posy that fell upon my heart
and hung its daisychains around my folded hands.

All these I feel and gather as I rise
and slowly lift my face, and turn
a hesitant, unearthly hand, uncertain
as to whether I am doing what is right;
and flexing rigid knees, and placing pointed feet
upon this sloping stage, I wander in the wings of earth,
along some inner way . . . remembering other childhoods,
I stagger like an infant with the weight

of darkness, and take my first
mysterious breath of earth.
Then it is as if
I never had been born,
or laid so long alone
and left for dead among
the stillnesses of this internal
cold, this long interior monologue of bone.

For here O here I glimmer into waking, I, the living
man, and I begin now to be whole again,
and gradually hope and fear
draw their scarlet threads along
one trembling vein, and through my life's eye.
And in my ready heart
an obscure knocking comes, and from my still-sealed lids
the first tear is pulled, and life in me returns,

familiar, multiple and strange.
O let me throw off
this yellow coat of clay,
these mysteries of frost and gauze,
and all the sad and foolish garments

of my past decay.
O let me turn my head here, and move
my shoulders a little to the left and right,

feeling the earth glide curiously past
my thinking face, turning the numbed axle of my sex,
and lift for the first and unforgettably
nostalgic moment, with what seems to be a smile,
my two lids, that melt upon my shrinking
dark-dazzled sight, and beat like butterflies
within the brilliant rubbed interior of night,
the hot eyeball drama of the throbbing dark.

And soon, deliberately, with one hand out-
stretched into premonitory future's present feel,
and one hand trailing on the granite keyboard of the past
to steady me, (for I am weak still), upon the shadow
which as yet falls only in my memory . . .
(and yet I long for it so much
I dare not look behind, like Orpheus
towards a lost Eurydice, and find it absent still . . .)

Feeling the harsh blood
burn in my new-found limbs, I climb
with a child's tired tread towards
some distant hollow in memorial cliffs,
to still caves where lie
fixed pools of sky reflecting
the reflected sky. O what solemn
visionary face and form will then appear

and O, what phantom
heart, what milk-like ghost
of summer breathed upon
the season's frost will animate
the vacant soul in me, and what
great wind of heat and pain
will blow the strength into my wounded,
wounded emptiness, and blow the sunlight

back into the sculptured ephemeral of air,
into this mineral and star-chilled hair?

II

The sleepwanderer carries
in one hand a rose
and with the other constantly
draws back innumerable curtains
that the shut eye alone can see.

He sets the rose
in its premeditated vase
and in thought's unseen glass
examines carefully his sleeping face.
He sees, behind him,

unknown persons pass
with strong shadows glittering like capes
and with the nonchalance befitting those
who see no door, but enter on a gesture
of dismissal, smiling, with the acrobat's

professional alacrity, walk with an acquired
grace through rooms built one inside the other,
each with a window open on a tree
that swings slowly like a fan across the distant sea,
and shuts with leaf-precision nightly on its painted bird.

The sleepwalker hears
no sound of danger on his dim
balconies of frost that overhang
a lake, a ballroom, a precipice, a little town.
He goes without a frown of recognition

through labyrinths where lost people wander
dragging the body's hunger in a universal dream.

III

How am I discovered?

At the imaginary centre
of the sea-shaped plain
I am the mistletoe the sacrificial urge.

I am the bird-oracle repeating
a continent's mountain rumours, or talking fast
at the heart of the storm-frightened forest.

Or in the convenient hills
I raise myself an obelisk
to the memory of.

Or like the interfering mole
surface a startled head
above the lawn's satin stripes.

I am also the lost child of the fable
spoken to kindly by colossal
woodcutters in the axe-wintered wood.

Laughed at or trampled featureless
on iron underfoot, I am the fool's hard face
caught in the hell-centre of an embryonic smile.

Or in the tumbled wake of the whale
reeling in agony upon the fixed
weapon, the frigate's passionate harpoon

pierces my tortured side
and from the seas of blood without a thought I rise.
But all the amber sponges and the sieving sands

will not dry up my wound again

all these, yet none,
for I am all things
and nothing, nothing

Part III: THE RECOGNITION

I

It was a hollow in the rock
where suddenly the wind was still
in childhood, some while ago.

Later, with book and wave-lit shadow
I would wander down the lonely bay . . .
O days as long as ever one remembers

as ever one remembers

It was a hollow in the rock,
now I remember clearly
the pool's cold hand

in which I laid my own,
and in the sand my fingers groped
vainly for gold, (how easily now), among the broken shells

(how easily now)

It was on such a day as only children know,
illumined by loneliness, obscured by love,
I fell away, away

O listen, I was laid away in silence
and alone, no more remembering the gulls below
the cliff, the clouds passing the wind-open door

the open door

And I was left to find my way unfriended
in dead lakes of oil, beneath the dripping
pediments of rock, the subterranean torrents

and earth's elemental draperies

O darkness let my longing cleave you like a boat
with iron prow, O fingers, seize the curtainings of space
and part them on the sky above

this airless cavern's grim translucent grave!

Hasten, hasten, steps, and walk
more solid pathways, in remoter
fields, less intimate than this, and hills

that keep a clearer sky, a clearer sky . . .

II

In the long summer noon we walked.
Through the tall glade's ocean-darkness
our tiny figures bravely moved and sang,
and brightly flickered the white birds of our hands.

At the glade's end, like an inland sea
of slow, honeyed waves, the cornfields swayed,
and O the warm yellow wind of the inshore swell
rolled them round the leaning earth and round

the brimming richness of horizons;
or with a whispered roar they pushed
their dust-foamed and amber-rooted tides
against a forest's green-stranded cliffs.

Delivered safely from the glade's trembling tunnel
round the sun's warm pedestal we danced, and with a sacred
ring of stones laid out the wind-
lifted tablecloth, and ate the bitter-rinded fruits, and drank

the wines of freedom, happiness and youth,
and felt heroic virtues stir within our bones.

III

I then began to glimpse, along
the wood's edge, the first
protracted funerals of noon.

IV

I look at last into the centre of the pool.

I am alone, and numerous as shapes of smoke.
I breathe, and find that air is good,
but that my breath will not be held
for long; then I remember, and my breath begins
to come and go, a subtle mixture.

I see dimly, for my eyes
receive so many things: and yet it seems
that these are leaves and boughs
that move as once I knew and O,
that moment of a bird, what dark-bright crash of wings!

I now remember, but barely yet,
how I was anchored in the plain and on the heights;
and what must have been the wind stirring
like an oar in my leafy lake, on which the darkness falls now
and I am the night, the new moon with a star in her sling.

Or has the pool deceived me
with the vision of what I most longed to be?
Now in the revolving dark a rock appears.
O is it rock I am, now I remember
how immovable I was!

O is it light I see, and wind or birds
singing, is it rock I feel, and boughs
that bear me scented blossoms,
leaves that hide in me
these dark, honeyed stores of fruit?

> In the restless
> mirror passes the relentless
> fusion of the seasons, the unyielding
> earth yields more than a stone . . .

O give me rest from change!

There is no rest from change.

Part IV: THE REVELATION

I

The universes
turn, slowly,

one more hinged
inevitable page.

The pool brightens
darkens extinguishes.

The sleepwalker turns
away relinquishes

the star-stretched
bubble of the outer sky.

The light's far-fetched
refusals crowd and die.

In the pool that stirred
and for a while was bright

touched by the shadow of a bird,
darkness seizes the long root of sight

and hauls, folded like a finished flower,
the dead face of water under its amber sand

and gathers up the petals of an hour
indifferently, in its perfect hand.

II

The rain falls and wears
a little earth, a little
earth away, a leaf moves brokenly
in a moment when the wind is still,
a cloud disperses and reveals
the moon like a fingerprint
in frost upon the window of the afternoon.

In the blue depths of snow, a footprint
marks the beginning of the legendary lane.
A house with flags flying falls at the epicentre
(which is any street), and builds a hollow dream of stone.
A human hand beckons out of the void
and there is no one there to answer,
though it does not really matter.

(Why do those lonely figures flee the mysteries of love,
mocking another's hunger? Why do they seem to disregard
the threat of doom that follows any mortal judgement, the delayed
drum-tap of fate, the future's vertical lament that is
the elegy of the unending present, and cannot be explained,
as avalanching distances reflect their mountain-peaks,
somehow, in the level lake-water lying at our feet?)

By such signs as snow and leaves the sleeper's
presence, power, and our own pathetic fate
sometimes are recognized in the great shed of sleep.
For in his hands, when knowledge
and the hold of life are vanished, water
becomes a wise stone, and stars
are strewn like hay upon the paradox

we hide, the veiled treasure we, the old
and sleepless, no longer innocent, withhold.

III

dreams,
dreams become death-riddles

time pain and death
take our unwilling

hands and join them
in a last long breath
if we will not be joined
by love we must be joined by death

O give us rest from change

for all eventually cast
the same long shadow as the ghost
of memory rememberng the primal host
a silence lighted from within

O give us rest from change

IV

Here in my nether
prison poignantly reminded,
though no bars arrest,
no walls contain, no cell restrains me,
ceaselessly reminded, till I learn forgetfulness again,
of sunlight on the most important mountains,

the Greenland gloom, the moon in a paper
lantern shining on the frosted
ballroom floor of ice, a scattering of snow, a white
breath of stars upon the night's black fur,
the wind smoking the crests of Asia, the dunes
of snow or sand or water, everywhere.

No more impatient of the chill
that is more everlasting than more everlasting, I remember
winter, firelight on a wall, a strange face above the windowsill.
Pressed humourously here like a faded
feather or a hair within the earth's
heavy folio I wait the turning of a page.

O let the god who lays his whole
fatal length against you or against your garden
and awakes you with a whispering knife, or else ignores
your infinite suitability, O let him spare
us, the dying, this gift of prophecy, and those
that struggle out of sleep again, the fixed

cross of the remembered dream.

EPILOGUE

deep deep again
darknesses bone
the jewelled rock
where I must drag my chains
to be dissolved and only
by subterranean rains
and forged again in agony

but in the end
there is no need
there is no real need

there is no real end

Wherever we look around us to-day the hand-made world is fast disappearing. The secondary landscape created by the crafts falls before the tantamount march of the machine. Between the realm of man and the realm of things an increasing alienation occurs. The objects that a man sees about him to-day bear a foreign, irrelevant, hostile look. They have never been nursed by loving human labour; never brought warmly and patiently to birth. Instead, they were spawned by mass-production; dropped and forgotten by that vast mechanical sow. Along this line we have reached to the contraption which lays our houses for us like eggs. Only one further invention is awaited: the robot-tenants and their test-tube child.

The imposition of this ready-made environment over the old nurture and husbandry of things was noticed with misgiving by the poet Rilke in a letter to a friend in 1925:

'Now there comes crowding over from America empty, indifferent things, pseudo-things, dummy life. . . . A house, in the American understanding, an American apple or vine, has nothing in common with the house, the fruit, the grape into which the hope and meditation of our forefathers had entered. . . . The animated, experienced things that share our lives are coming to an end. We are perhaps the last to have still known such things.'

Humanity no longer finds itself at home on the earth which should have been its palace and garden. A two-fold severance of man from his surroundings leaves him like a stranger on the face of his own planet. First, by the rise of consciousness and development of towns and industry, he finds himself torn from the womb of nature, in which he was one with animal existence. Next, he endures this new estrangement from the hand-made world he built up around him. The manual background which he created—effecting a humanization of things—yields to a rigid mechanical décor wherein objects look back with a vacant stare.

The task of assisting man to live on a neighbourly footing with the things of his universe is one which poets have always shouldered; the more so because it has often remained unconscious. Wherever the work of taking over an aspect of life unpoeticized by man is approached in a conscious *a priori* fashion the resultant work of art somehow fails to convince.

Thus, the Italian futurists, with all their premeditated Zeitgist frenzy, tried to swallow the locomotive-world, without mastication,

at one tremendous gulp. In spite of their engineering rhetoric, their railway and air-force posters in verse; in spite of their sonnets to bombs and machine-guns, they failed in their achievement to create a lasting art. The error they made lay in the mistaking of honest intention for real inspiration; and, also, in thinking of poetry as a new stop-press, late-extra kind of art.

In this difficult assimilation of the outside world into human terms—this conversion of the details of modern chaos into mental ciphers and signatures of meaning—the verse of T. S. Eliot stands near to the fore. Certainly, in England, his painful digestion of the artificial landscape marked a new epoch. Poetry was forced to extend its idiom beyond the boundaries of the nightingale-and-rose; and the new metropolitan sensibility received from his writing a good flying-start. The significance, however, which Eliot bequeathed to the modern object-setting was void and negatory; its meaning lay precisely in the absence of meaning. The world of things, he saw, like man as worthless and fallen. The factory-spring was broken and the human spirit was snapped.

Into this atmosphere of 'displaced' objects where phenomena wander like unwanted refugees—this eunuch, neuter, and colourless world—enters the poetry of the Spaniard, Alberti.

Full of a rapidly combustible lyricism—an inspiration which a feather touches off—the most nondescript sansculotte details of existence suffice to set his poetry powerfully ablaze. He stands in no need of intimate contact with the 'upper-class' image in the world of things. He does not require the Court Cards of living in order to bring beauty home crowned to his mind. Whereas other poets must play lickspittle and flunkey to the great patron-circle of created matter; to the moon, to the stars, to the first flowers of spring, he finds himself rewarded by a burnt-out match.

And so he becomes a kind of unofficial herald—a fervid troubadour to the Third Estate of things. Redeemed on the wave of his pæan of praise and mystery the despised and exile miscellany of matter finds itself repatriated back into meaning. A festival of rehabilitation occurs. This great restoration of the disinherited is something no other contemporary poet has effected on such a high level of song. The riff-raff of things march past us in triumph: the vulgarity of matter assumes patrician grace. Their very humble station enhances their glory; as if, by the paradox which poetry is, a sudden illumination of that Gospel maxim—'The first shall be last and the last first'—stood revealed.

In the name of space and general readability both Spanish and English excerpts cannot be given; but the splendid versions by Eleanor Turnbull retain much of the original's music and zest. Here is the poem 'Dead Angels,' translated by her, in its entirety:

'Look, yes, look for them:
in the insomnia of forgotten water-pipes,
in ditches choked by the silence of refuse.
Not far from puddles too small to reflect a cloud,
or lost eyes,
a broken ring
or a trampled star.

Because I have seen them:
in that débris which appears for a moment in the mist.
Because I have touched them:
in the banishment of a broken brick,
come to naught, fallen from a tower or a cart,
Never far from chimnies that are crumbling
nor from those clinging leaves that imprint themselves
on the sole of a shoe.
In all this.

But also in those scattered bits of wood
that consume themselves without fire,
in those collapsed absences which rickety furniture suffers,
not very far from the names and signs that
grow cold on walls.

Look, yes, look for them:
under the drop of wax which buries the word
in a book,
or the signature on one of those corners of letters
which blow around in the dust.
Near the broken fragments of a discarded bottle,
an old shoe lost in the snow,
and a razor thrown away on the edge of a precipice.'

More than a total amnesty to the world of matter these verses proclaim. The lowest and most rejected particle is welcomed back like the Prodigal Son. Where others find only a sordid insignificance Alberti discovers the seed of mysterious meaning. From all these

jettisoned fragments of squalor, these items of débris, a value radiates forth.

'Rose-seule, rien-que-rose,' sang the poet Rilke in one of his prose-poems written in French. In a somewhat similar, less 'beauteous' fashion, Alberti celebrates the identity of things. By the closest verbal appreciation possible—through the intimate nature of poetic knowledge—he brings before the light the uniqueness of something, the object in itself, the morsel of matter *per se*.

Perhaps there is only one such another poem, using the idiom of our time, in which such a marvellous literary redemption of the world of dreary detail has been achieved. This is 'The Gravel-pit Field', by David Gascoyne, in which

> '*On the far edge of Being, where*
> *Life's last faint forms begin to lose*
> *Name and identity and fade*
> *Away into the Void, endures*
> *The final thin triumphant flame*
> *Of all that's most despoiled and bare.*'

The poem of Alberti already quoted comes from his book, *Sobre los angeles*. This is his most important work; and the Spanish critic, Pedro Salinas, has hailed its author in the following terms: 'Clear the way! Rafael, singer of left-out angels, of left-behind angels, of the foolish angel, of the bandaged, of the strayed and the immaculate. Defender of the proletariat of angels.' He compliments Alberti for having created his angels afresh from unused poetic clay, for having manufactured no second-hand cherubims, no celestial copies from the altar of the Church. He speaks of his denouncing 'the little angels of candy, of sugar-cakes, and coloured prints'; and praises these 'angels that in no way conform to the traditional interpretation of art'.

Compared with the famous angel-figures of Rilke, the angels of Alberti are of lowly birth: the simple plebeian children of matter as opposed to the princelings of the super-conscious mind. For the German poet they existed as

> '*Early successes, Creation's pampered darlings,*
> *ranges, summits, dawn-red ridges*
> *of all beginnings,—pollen of blossoming god-head*'

and

> '*mirrors, drawing up their own*
> *outstreamed beauty into their faces again.*'

His were the angels of the metaphysical poet—priest of the transcendent image and wish. For Alberti, subscribing to surrealist tenets, the angel is a more empirical being: a kind of non-holy *deus loci*, a fragment of 'becoming', imperfection itself. Using the terms of philosophy, we could say that the angels of Rilke have their place in Plato's realm of Pure Ideas, in the great idealistic *status quo*. Contrasting with this the angels of Alberti belong to Aristotle's world of growth. Here they exist as potential particles waiting to discover their actual final form. These are the angels of a slow evolution; angels of the man for whom the Earth is God.

'All real living is meeting,' writes the Jewish thinker, Martin Buber. 'True beings,' he says, 'are lived in the present, the life of objects is in the past'.

In the angels of Alberti's poetry the objects are brought before us in the present. We meet them there, and they live in our meeting; inviolate and pure, with a life all their own.

Not man alone but things are in need of salvation. From every aspect of living integral value bleeds away. Worth is no more than a sale-price label: beauty and truth are black-market luxury-goods. To-day the modern plutocrat—the parvenu Mæcenas—asks you how you like a new picture of his. 'I paid three thousand for it,' says Crœsus as critic—a safe criterion!—as he turns away.

Against this dollar-vision of existence Alberti contributes a real restitution of things. He is the redeemer of the 'displaced' object, a lyrical Good Samaritan to our wounded material world.

DEREK STANFORD

Rafael Alberti was born in 1902 in Puerto de Santa Maria, a suburb of Cadiz. For a while he studied painting in Madrid and exhibited there in 1922. Later, for his health's sake, he went to live in the mountains of Guadarrama y Rute. Since then he has published thirteen books; the last four in Buenos Aires.

The best book for reference to his work in English is 'Contemporary Spanish Poetry' (Humphrey Milford: Oxford University Press). This contains many of his poems, both in the original and in translation, as well as some data on his writing and his life.

RAFAEL ALBERTI

FROM SOBRE LOS ANGELES

The Angel of the Mystery

Dream without lamps and dampness of forgetting,
trod by a name and a shadow.
I know not if a name or many names,
a shadow or many shadows
Reveal it to me.

I know that cold voices dwell in the wells,
whether of one body or of many,
of one sole spirit or many,
I know not.
Tell me.

That a riderless horse is printing on the walls
the woman who used to ride it.
That on the battlements there's crying someone dead
that I touched in a mirror as I slept,
that I was dumb and told him. . . .
I know not.
Make it plain to me.

The Revengeful Angels

No, they didn't know you
the souls you knew.
But mine did.

Say who you are; we don't remember you
on earth or sky.

Tell us, what dimension is your shadow.
What light extended it
into our kingdom?

Where do you come from?
Tell us, wordless shadow;

we don't remember you.
Say, who commands you?
Were you, perhaps, the lightning in a dream;
but lightnings are forgotten when they're quenched.

Taking you for a stranger,
the souls you knew have killed you.
But not mine.

The Angel of the Ruins

But day arrived at last, the hour of pails and shovels.
The light was not expecting the minutes' fall,
for it was seeking in the sea distraction for the
drowneds' nostalgia for the land.
No one expected that the skies would dawn esparto green
nor angels put verdigris stars to flight over men's heads.

Clothes did not expect so prompt an emigration of bodies.
Through a navigable dawn it was fleeing from the dryness of the beds.

There was talk of petrol,
of disasters that caused inexplicable lapses of memory.
There was a rumour in the sky of the rose's treason.
With my soul I observe the smuggling of gunpowder
on the left hand of the corpse of a nightingale, my friend.
Do not come near.

You never thought that your shadow would return to the shadow,
when a revolver shot wounded the silence.
But at last that second arrived,
disguised as night awaiting an epitaph.
Quicklime is the substance that occasions the projection of the dead.

I told you not to come near.
I begged you to keep a little distance:
the slightest, but sufficient for the understanding of a dream
and for a purposeless disgust to burst the flowers and the boilers
Before the outrages the moon was very tender
and would come down the factory chimneys to the furnaces.
Now she is defiled and dying on an unforeseen map of petroleum,
attended by an angel who hastens her death agony
Men of zinc, tar and lead forget her.

Men of pitch and mud forget
that their ships and trains
in a bird's eyes
are a spot of oil now in the middle of the world,
bordered on all sides by crosses.
They have forgotten
as I, as all, have forgotten.

And now no one expects the arrival of the express,
the light's official visit to the impoverished seas,
the voices' resurrection in the echoes that burn to ash.

The Dead Angels

Seek, seek them
in the insomnia of forgotten pipes,
in drains interrupted by the silence of refuse.
Not far from puddles that cannot hold a cloud,
eyes—lost,
a broken ring
or a trampled star.

Because I have seen them
in that momentary rubble that appears in the mist.

Because I have touched them:
in the exile of a dead brick
come to nothingness off a tower or a cart.
Never far beyond that chimneys that crash to earth,
nor from those tenacious leaves that stamp themselves into shoes.

In all that.
But also in those stray splinters that are consumed without fire,
in those unexplained disappearances of broken down furniture,
not far from the names and signs that freeze on walls

Seek, seek them:
beneath the spot of wax that buries the word in a book
or the signature on one of those corners of letters
that the dust trails around.
Near the lost stopper of a bottle,
a sole lost in the snow
or a razor left on the edge of a precipice.

(Translated by G. M. COHEN)

REVIEWS

RHETORIC, GLORY, AND POETRY

DUNSTON THOMPSON, *Poems* (Secker & Warburg, 6s. net); KENNETH PATCHEN, *An Astonished Eye looks out of the Air* (Untide Press, Waldport, Oregon); LAWRENCE DURRELL, *Cities, Plains, and People* (Faber & Faber, 6s. net); HOWARD SERGEANT, *The Leavening Air* (Fortune Press, 5s. net); edited by HOWARD SERGEANT, *For Those who are Alive* (Fortune Press, 6s. net).

'Eloquence,' Herbert Read wrote once, 'is the expression of glory: glory in words, not of words.'

Reading the poems of Dunstan Thompson it is well to carry this text in mind; to bear it as both touchstone and compass against the oceanic welter of his verse. Perhaps this precaution is the more worth while since the poet writes most seducingly about his 'tall sailors with yellow hair', his 'damask duke' and 'Fancy boy of heroes', his 'lilac Lucifer' and 'young men of Mars'.

Here are just three lines from a poem, 'Glistening Phaeton,' which give a faint indication of the star-spangled-banner style of writing which this American poet employs:

> '*The light was lava to explode your heart*
> *When crowns of fire were kingly to your head:*
> *The mountains of the moon gave up their dead.*'

It is all honey and bombshells, so to speak; a richly explosive alliterative syrup.

This thrice-whipped cream of rhetoric, with its frothing spate of images, gushes on the brink of the melodramatic and sometimes takes the fatal leap. The occasional vertigo then yields most riotous results:

> '. . . *disastrous eyes*
> *Wanton as wounds, gaped with God's terrible tears.*'

Perhaps such figures as the above, which appear to be dredged from wells of violet ink, may challenge the purple of John Donne's line:

> '*Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with tears*'.

Yet even the presence of the 'gloomy Dean' cannot assure the critic here. 'Violence,' he remembers, as Joubert said, 'is not power; some authors have more talent than muscle.'

It is not, however, the trait of talent which seems to be lacking in this verse. If by talent we mean the turn of words, the power to orchestrate syllables and vowels, then Thompson is one of our leading young poets. It is something else we seem to miss: the absence of a valid human content. To put it more simply, what is interesting is the verification, not the man; the music, and not the meaning of the song.

In the midst of this lurid, latter-day baroque we meet sometimes with such a line, simple and sound, as the following:

'The end of love is that the heart is still.'

The total impact of this book leads me to misquote a line from Marlowe: 'So will thy triumph seem magnifical'. A forecast of future greatness perhaps. For those of discrimination, however, the present keyword is the verb.

'Take rhetoric and wring its neck,' wrote Paul Verlaine in one of his poems, intent on the task of discovering a more immediate form of expression. This advice Kenneth Patchen has seriously received. He has taken rhetoric, syntax and logic and thoroughly wrung the necks of all three.

If Thompson is too much a poet to be human, Patchen is too human to be simply a poet. He is one of those rare phenomena of an author whose verse is poetry, but disdains to qualify as literature proper. 'The first thing in writing is to get rid of charm,' he has said in one of his books of prose; and for poetry as verbal bricklaying he has nothing but hatred and contempt. 'I spit on what you call literature,' he writes; and for Patchen poetry is a branch of polemics and cartoon rather than a department of art. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that poetry for him is the art of brick-throwing; a sort of gunnery of the brick-bats of speech.

If all this furious flaunting of 'form' was merely the means of a racketeer-mind to obtain an easy advertisement, Patchen would be very small fry indeed.

However, he appears as a man with a message, a man with a mission who must make himself heard. In a world where life is trapped in the atom-maze art will often prove an earthquake affair. It no longer serves as tapestry but appears as the writing on the wall. It sounds like the siren of a ship in the night. Its tone is not always at drawing-room pitch.

This alarm-bell verse of Kenneth Patchen is a clamorous, uncouth, loud-mouthed art. It is not the poetry of B.B.C. announcers, but the voice of a prophet who is all but driven mad.

> '*Beings so hideous that the air weeps blood*
> *And the forehead of God shrivels,*
> *Advance towards us.*'

These are the creatures of whom he writes—the monster-phantoms of a power-and-profit world, the devil-figures that lurk within us all.

'Glory,' wrote the French thinker Vauvenargues, 'is the radiance in which virtues flourish'; and one of the tasks of the sense of glory is the constant fight against human degradation.

Patchen, then, is an antidote artist, a poet of the sense of glory in eclipse. With such writers there can be no moderation. We have either to accept or reject them as they stand. Should we not, after all, have lost much if we had been spared the salvationist jargon of those great dissenter-epics known as Blake's 'Prophetic Books'?

If Patchen represents the mood of 'Measure for measure' in the latest modern verse, then Durrell may claim to have written its 'Tempest'. (It would, no doubt, prove amusing to fit other poets into this scheme. Spender's verse might stand as its 'Romeo and Juliet', but Eliot and Auden would both prove misfits, the former as a Dantean figure, the latter as being too metaphysical. Comparisons when stretched to this extent assume the appearance of special pleading.)

In the best work in *Cities, Plains and People* there is a kind of self-contained sauvity of mind and expression, a mellow unhurried utterance which can only lead the prosaic critic to think of the stooks of gathered corn, of apples on the still September trees, or incite him to murmur 'Ripeness is all'.

This maturity of acceptance gives us such lines as the following:

> '*These ships, these islands, these simple trees*
> *Are our rewards in substance, being poor.*
> *This earth a dictionary is*
> *To the root and growth of seeing,*
> *And to the servant heart a door.*'

Yet there is none of the self-deceiving 'all's-right-with-the-world'-in-the-long-run view. This myth of contentment he finds in Horace, laying it bare with consummate skill:

'*Who built in the Sabine hills this forgery*
Of completeness, an orchard with a view of Rome;
Who studiously developed his sense of death
Till it was all around him, walking at the circus
At the baths, playing dominoes in a shop—
The escape from self-knowledge with its tragic
Imperatives: Seek, suffer, endure. *The Roman*
In him feared the Law and told him where to stop.'

Once more back to the speech of golden fulness! Here are the last lines in the book from a poem which gives it its title:

'*For Prospero remains the evergreen*
Cell by the margin of the sea and land,
Who many cities, plains, and people saw
Yet by his open door
In sunlight fell asleep
One summer with the Apple in his hand.'

If rhetoric is the glory of words, glory 'the radiance in which virtues flourish', then poetry is the speech of glory, the eloquence born when the two combine. Of such a union, we feel, the best of Durrell is a product.

This first volume of poems, *The Leavening Air*, by Howard Sergeant, editor of the verse-magazine *Outposts*, is perhaps a somewhat misleading collection.

Sergeant is a poet who developed late, coming to poetry after a struggle to escape from the hardships of his childhood and the demands of his business profession. But if he was tardy in starting to write, his evolution—when once begun—proved a rapid full-steam-ahead affair.

It thus happens that many of the poems found in this book already belong to the green Spring of his authorship, which to-day has most certainly entered its summer. All these verses reveal the traits of a true poetic-sapling mind: music, imagery, and urgent vigour. Only a few of the poems, though, notably 'Lyric by the River', 'High Kingdom,' and 'Love-poem', suggest the calibre that Sergeant now possesses. From the first of these I quote the following lines:

'*From where I lean upon the edge of darkness*
the river holds its lanterns to your face,
and where your walking breaks
the surface in a mazurka of stars
you are the syllables the wise-lipped water makes.'

For Those who are Alive is, without doubt, the best collection of younger modern verse made since Tambimuttu produced his Faber anthology of poets in war-time.

This volume contains the work of fifty-five contemporary poets, including such figures as James Kirkup, John Bayliss, Norman Nicholson, Alan Rook, and Francis Scarfe. It also represents a lesser-known galaxy comprising Busby Smith, G. A. Wagner, Nessie Dunsmuir, Eithne Wilkins, Hardiman Scott, and a host of others, some of whom are quite new discoveries.

For Those who are Alive is, by no means, what so many anthologies are apt to be—a family-album or scrap-book in verse. Instead, it might rather be described as a nursery-catalogue of poets from which the future will draw plenty of its stock.

DEREK STANFORD

PROLONGED NOVENA . . .

V. SACKVILLE-WEST, *The Garden* (Michael Joseph, 8s. 6d.).

I am unable to approach Miss Sackville-West's new long poem, *The Garden*, in any critical mood. I can only bring praise; not the sharp valuation, the detached comment, the poetical summary. To begin with, I have only recently become part-owner of a garden in the country and been given a copy of Evelyn's 'Directions For His Gardiner': two small items of personalia which establish my bias. Such details linked with my admiration for Miss Sackville-West's urbane and tender prose make my approach that of the enthusiast.

The Garden is presented by its publishers as a successor to 'The Land' (Hawthornden prize volume, 1927); although I understand this parallel, I am more inclined to see *The Garden* as a poetical relative to 'All Passion Spent', that magnificent and moving prose work. *The Garden* with its winter, spring, summer and autumn moods contains that same perception and wisdom, that abundant and generous humanity, that awareness of all sorrow and all ultimate quietude. At the risk of sounding old-fashioned I would add, that same beauty.

'Small pleasures must correct great tragedies'; from this beginning Miss Sackville-West traces not only the continuity of life in the garden, but the continuity of human relativity to work, love, sorrow, fulfilment and death.

'Not only war but natural winter carries
This valuable and enforced retreat,

As monks will seek in contemplation's cell
An increment of quiet holiness,
Prolonged novena. . . .'

The thought is recurrent; here is the wisdom, 'much toil, much care, much love and many years went to the slow reward'. This slow cycle has no Achilles heel, only the details are vulnerable; the aim is the motivating power, more important than the achievement.

'. . . choose the lavish best;
Impatience and a false economy
Never made value yet. . . .
Le Nôtre saw a skeleton design,
Content if but the future were assured. . . .'

Inadequately I can only quote pointers to the larger mind which wrote this poem. I can only touch at the deep personal knowledge of happiness, of sorrow, of apathy; none stands apart, inter-related they grow together gaining their own wisdom, their own solitude, their curious appeasement. It would be a trespass for me even to hint at meaning, since such explanation can only be personal, and this poem is personal however linked on the surface with the larger impersonalities of garden growth and way.

Knowledgeable of all seasons Miss Sackville-West knows how best to approach the future through the past, knows how inadequate conclusions are, how false and misleading the certain rule.

'Truth is not wholly truth, that only truth observes.
There's a finer truth that sometimes swerves. . . .

Beauty's not always in a scarlet robe,
She wears an old black shawl;
She flaunts the flesh and shows the bone
When winter trees are tall.
More beautiful than fact may be
The shadow on the wall. . . .'

Every seasonal intricacy is covered by Miss Sackville-West: winter with its planning, its work at the potting-bench, its lingering into March; spring with the lighter touch, the careless disregard, the 'flowers unawares'; summer with fulfilment, 'I have no love for such fulfilment'.

'For our life is terribly private in the end,
In the last resort;
And if our self's a stranger, what's a friend?

A pretty children's game of let's pretend!
We can share nor the puzzle nor the grief,
Neither the physical nor mental pain,
The insecurity, the fears insane. . . .
How fortunate, that life should be so brief!'

And because of summer's flower-and-the-fruit brevity, we are urged to 'dare th' unorthodox; be always bold; be prince'; ready to accept autumn 'not the last rung of any ladder in the yearly climb':

'*My verb is still in the indicative.*
Oh years gone by! oh years still going past
In a wild crescendo, fast and ever fast
Like some mad back-cloth scenes that, worked
as speed,
Drawn backwards in their prospect still recede,
And I, oh God! not ready let to live.'

Failing to give this poem's full content, I realize that only the impression is needed. We cannot wholly recommend what we truly like; there is an instinctive reticence which happily keeps us from such treason, for treason of a kind it is to overspill an enthusiasm.

EDWARD LANE

TWO IRISH POETS

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY, *Perennial* (Constable, 7s. 6d.); DONAGH MACDONAGH, *Happy as Larry* (Maurice Fridberg, 6s.).

Irish poetry in the English language during the War years might easily have stagnated and become a pocket of peaty water far away from the central stream of writing in English. Actually, apart from the work of a few ostrich-headed poets, this danger never materialized. The latest crop of younger Irish poets stood aghast at the new seizure of horror and brutality in the world, yet could find no occasion for joining in just in order to keep in step with insanity. We found that we had a certain quota of leisure, denied our outside contemporaries, in which to crystallize our respective attitudes.

The breakaway from a spurious and effete to a genuine romanticism was especially marked. W. R. Rodgers, Roy McFadden, Valentin Iremonger belonged to no specific movement, yet, with the others, they constituted a general revolt against the unfortunate legacy of W. B. Yeats. Even Patrick Kavanagh (the Irish equivalent

of Roy Campbell), who produced a fine social-documentary in 'The Great Hunger', crammed with realist details, achieved a strong romantic undertone. The death of Higgins cut short the career of a man who had emerged from the mellifluous mists of the earlier Yeats.

Dr. Oliver St. John Gogarty's publishers state, by way of blurb, that his poetry—

> has received the unstinted praise of William Butler Yeats, George Moore, James Stephens, AE, and John Masefield.

But the opinions of the big guns of yesterday—and especially that of the 'archpoet'—all very good fellows at giving a testimonial to entertaining friends, can hardly awe any longer even the reader who has only a cursory acquaintance with modern Irish literature. Dr. Gogarty is primarily an entertainer—a wit, a controversialist, a specialist in Dublin conversational sparkle.

Perennial suggests that some of his poems may be hardy annuals. In his ballads, Dr. Gogarty is at his best, for the ballad is nearest to direct speech, to the talk of everyman in the pub. He writes briskly of Bill Baveler who 'kept the Brown Stone Inn'. But perhaps it is in the racing swagger of 'Farrell O'Reilly' that he most felicitously sings the hard-riding Irish gentleman:

> '*You, Farrell O'Reilly, I feared as a boy*
> *With your thin riding legs and your turned-in toes;*
> *I feared the sharp, gimlet-like look in your eye,*
> *Your rumbling brown beard and your pocketed nose.*
> *Old friend of my Father what brings you back now?*
> *You died fifty-nine years or sixty ago.*'

Dr. Gogarty achieves a delicate sensuality in 'Leda and the Swan'. In the shorter poems there is little fire: they are not so much damp squibs as shrivelled faggots. Wit has skipped off and leaves us the residue of sentiments that were better-handled by more original minds thirty years ago. Fortunately there is a good sprinkling of ballad metre.

Donagh MacDonagh is the son of the poet Thomas MacDonagh who was executed after the Easter Rising of 1916. He is as mindful of the Gaelic heritage as of the sights and sounds of contemporary poetry. His verse in this play is tough, assured, colloquial, sometimes lyrical.

The theme of *Happy as Larry* is the faithlessness of woman and the lubricity of man. Larry is a slick Dubliner, a bit of a 'bowsey' (much the same as the Glasgow 'keelie') who strays upon the Widow,

a buxom lass of twenty who is busily employed looking mournful and fanning the grave of her just-buried husband. Larry leisurely discusses suttee and Dido—

> '. . . *a queen of some sort*
> *Got caught in a jam with a sailor*
> *Whose anchor was dropped in her port*'

before realizing that the Widow swore when her husband was dying from over-eating oysters not to re-marry until his grave was dry. Larry seduces the woman from her noble task, brings her home to the missus who is virtuously indignant at the Widow's fanning action at the graveside. The Doctor, his rolling eye on Mrs. Larry's curves, calmly proceeds to poison his brother Larry, with the connivance of the pharmacist Seamus.

Retribution (partly egged on by the outraged chorus of Six Tailors, who are Posterity, planted side-stage) steps in and kills off Mrs. Larry, the lecherous slut and the Doctor, the treacherous lout. And then there appears a resurrected Larry dripping blood, who harangues with the original Widow on the frailty of women before they both tumble into bed with the blessing of the Six Tailors, who piously witness Virtue Rewarded.

The verse is a bit chopped-up and is sometimes jingly, but Mr. MacDonagh sustains his realist fantasy with admirable zest. Wit, satire, fun and frolic and a good many kicks in the pants for the Irish book censors add to the atmosphere of hilarity. Here is a heady cocktail mixed by one of the Tailors for the villainous Doctor:

> '*Arsenic, strychnine, sulphuric acid,*
> *Poison distilled from the rankest root,*
> *Hyoscine and Chemist's bane*
> *That fattens the gallows with annual fruit.*
>
> *Pour it out for him, sour flat stout for him,*
> *Bluestone porter, claret cup,*
> *Christmas whiskey laced with Red Biddy*
> *Bath-brewed beer and Johnny Jump-Up.*'

(Poteen: pronounced pot-yeen; illicitly distilled liquor. Johnny Jump-Up: potent cider.)

And here is an extract from a straight speech, reminiscent of Mr. MacDonagh's shorter lyrics:

> '*We are the first explorers, we are the pioneers that came*
> *Out of the virgin country, our flag's a question-mark.*

Quandry is our name, our sun and moon are dark,
Our faces featureless, our country unnamed.'

Happy as Larrie is a welcome example of Irish craftsmanship in printing, and is worthy of the tradition of Dublin's famous printing houses. The black and white illustrations by Francis Rose are attractive and lavish. *Perennial*, despite a London imprimatur, was also 'made' in Ireland. It would be gratifying if more Irish poets could be published and printed in their own country, instead of having to rely on marginal publication by London firms.

ROBERT GREACEN

TRANSATLANTIC TRUMPS

Edited by NICHOLAS MOORE, *The PL Book of American Short Stories* (Editions Poetry London, 8s. 6d. net).

Short stories are the lyrics of the fiction world. Their characters and situations are born in a rapid intuitive way. Instantaneous combustion is the principle of their motive power, and the method of their composition suggests the phrase of 'love at first sight'.

This being so, we find the short story—in comparison with the novel—yields us a field of greater tension. We are more on our toes here; the pressure is up. And so we get likewise, in the style of writing, a closer texture, more weight to each word. The anti-personnel bombs of shock and surprise, the sensitive mines of sudden explosive vision are sown more thickly in these meadows than in the wide pampas and savannahs of the novel.

Another reflection which this book prompts, with its seventeen writers and a story apiece, is the great superiority of the Americans over our own writers here. All of these tales are uniquely different, all of them personal to their authors. We find very little of the bones of 'the plot' sticking through the fabric of these stories, the occurrence of which in English work has turned so much of our home-grown shorter fiction into a masquerade of dummies where the skeleton from the Anatomy class is dressed in coloured rags and produced as living flesh.

Perhaps the reason for this is to be sought in the relative youth of American society. Both Vico and Hegel have pointed out that young cultures are the most poetic. Tradition gives rise to Academies with their rule-of-thumb dictation of taste and their policing of the creative instinct.

Upon this ethos of greater etiquette more spacious art would seem to thrive. Dante's 'Divine Comedy' and Tolstoi's portmanteau 'War and Peace' would appear to require the scaffolding of social precedent and convention. Not so the short story—a pioneer, uncharted literary form. Perhaps, then, this transatlantic triumph is appropriate to the land of the early Pilgrim Fathers.

Whatever hypothesis we prefer the fact of the book before us remains with its cogent, imaginative first-hand proof of a fine western harvest of 'little fiction'. From the cultivated illiterate note of Hemingway and John O'Hara to the sensuous poetic perception of Kay Boyle, from the pleading eloquence of Ben Hecht to the deep pathos of Katherine Anne Porter, from the fantasy and fun of William Saroyan to the smoky passion of William Faulkner, from the bravavura of Henry Miller to the feminine thought-reading of Eudora Welty, all the important roads and directions of American work are represented.

So far, I have only read one adverse criticism of this collection. A certain literary auctioneer employed as reviewer on one of the waily dailies complained there was not enough Ha-ha in it. We suggest he buys a copy of the Aberdeen Joke Book.

DEREK STANFORD

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